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Chair

Ms. Anita Neville

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):
Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome.

I'm delighted to welcome so many people here from across Canada to assist the newly formed Standing Committee on the Status of Women in our discussions.

Let me begin by telling you a little bit about how we got here today. Some of you appeared before the committee early on, when we first were established, to help the committee establish some of its priorities and some of its issues. At that time, after the completion of the meetings—and we had six weeks of meetings and heard from approximately fifty groups from across the country—we identified and established priorities that arose out of the committee hearings we had held.

One of the issues that came to the fore, front and centre, was the whole matter of core funding. You may be aware that we've tabled a report in Parliament, which we have some copies of here, asking for additional dollars for the status of women program. But we haven't addressed the issue of core funding or long-term funding, so the committee agreed to hold two round table discussions to deal with funding issues, with women's groups and equality-seeking organizations.

The groups at this table represent a wide diversity of groups and equality-seeking organizations, literally from Newfoundland to British Columbia. We have another group coming next Tuesday. I'm not sure whether we have a full representation from across the country here today, but we tried very hard to accommodate the schedules of the groups who were appearing before the committee.

I want to thank you for coming on short notice. I want to thank you for doing your homework on short notice, and I appreciate, and I think all committee members appreciate, the effort you made to present a statement for us, a two-page brief. They're very important for us to understand the issues.

If you're questioning how you've been seated here, the clerk tells me he just put you around the table in alphabetical order. That's the rationale for the seating order here.

We're going to move forward. What I would suggest is this. We've asked you each to make a one-minute statement on the essence of your issues. We're doing this deliberately. This is not a common procedure in a parliamentary committee, but we're doing it deliberately to try to create some interactive discussion, so that we're not bogged down by—and I don't mean this disrespectfully—

so that we're not dealing with lengthy briefs, so that it will allow for interaction between those of you who have come here today and members of the committee.

I'm going to try very hard to keep it interactive. We usually go in a questioning order, but following the presentation of briefs I'm going to ask the official opposition to lead off on the questioning, and then make it as interactive as possible, so that everybody can respond. I'll do my best, assisted by the clerk and the research staff, to keep a speaking order so that we have a fair opportunity for discussion and response to it.

After the discussion part, I'm going to ask each of you if you would make a one-minute statement again, summing up what is the most important thing for you. I know many of us have been part of these discussions in our own communities, and we've come away with some ideas, but I think it's important that we all hear from you what your issues are.

Again, I welcome you and thank you for coming. I think we'll begin in the order you're seated alphabetically.

Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Just as a point of information, my understanding is that we were really hoping to focus on solutions, not issues.

The Chair: Thank you. Yes, that is the focus of it, and I meant to speak to it. What we're hoping from you is some concrete ideas on how we can take this back into government and make some recommendations on how we can or perhaps cannot move forward on this issue, but we're looking at concrete solutions on moving forward on it.

Thank you.

Debra Critchley, would you like to begin, please?

• (1540)

Ms. Debra Critchley (Coordinator, Vernon and District Women's Centre Society, B.C. Rural Women's Network): Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here.

My name is Debra Critchley, and I work at the Vernon women's centre in British Columbia. The Vernon women's centre is also a member of the BC Coalition of Women's Centres, which represents about 31 of the remaining 35 women's centres in B.C. Our women's centre administers the initiative of the B.C. Rural Women's Network.

The information I received about the one-minute statement wasn't super clear. I don't know if there are any solutions in this, but I'll proceed and hope there are.

Coming from British Columbia, I believe we're one of the most recent examples of what happens when a provincial government pulls support for women's equality-seeking organizations. All women's centres used to have core funding provincially, I believe since about 1998. The issue of moving women's equality agendas forward should not be left to the whim of provinces, especially since there are no mechanisms in place for the federal government to address this. I will remind you that B.C. was singled out by the UN for criticism for its most recent policy changes affecting women.

Canada has many obligations with respect to women, not the least of which is CIDA. Restoring core funding is the first step in ensuring that Canada's women's equality-seeking organizations are sustainable, demonstrating Canada's commitment to women's equality. Restoring core funding is practical and possible, and it's the right thing to do to support women's equality-seeking organizations.

The Chair: Thank you.

Lise Girard, do you want to proceed?

Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lise Girard (Secretary-General, Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale): I will try to be brief. I must say I followed the outline we received regarding questions which would be dealt with. So I addressed each question individually.

First, I would like to say that I am from the AFEAS, l'Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale. It is a Quebec organization which brings together 15,000 women from 350 localities. L'AFEAS has an education and social mandate and is an advocacy group for women's rights.

We were asked to give an overview of the organization's current funding. The annual budget for the AFEAS head office is about \$662,000. Add to that the budget for the 12 regional secretariats, and it is of about \$1 million per year. As to the breakdown of funding, 53% is from internal sources such as membership dues and fundraising activities; 36% of funding comes from government assistance, with a \$105,000 from the Government of Quebec and approximately \$125,000 from the Women's Program; 11% is generated by agreements that AFEAS negotiates with its private sector partners by offering them visibility during our activities and in our publications. Our main partners include pharmaceutical firms such as Lilly and Merck Frosst, financial institutions such as Desjardins Financial Security and Visa Desjardins and goods and services sector enterprises such as GREICHE & SCAFF and Bétonel.

The other question was regarding the functioning of the current project base funding model under the Women's Program. For the past few decades, AFEAS has decided voluntarily to stabilize its core funding by diversifying its sources of revenue. Many years ago, AFEAS made the choice to not totally rely on any single source of revenue and to boost its working capital so that it would never have to temporarily halt its activities during the year due to delayed receipt of fresh funds. It is specifically as a result of having had to

deal with cash flow problems with projects already under way that we made this decision.

We were asked whether AFEAS was benefiting from project funding. That is probably the case, because its basic operations are stable. The organization's permanent staff and its facilities allow it to develop projects more easily without interrupting basic operations.

We were also asked to identify which form core funding should take. Clearly it is not easy to determine which groups should have access to core funding from Status of Women Canada. The same issue was raised in Quebec some years ago when the Government of Quebec decided to review all of its programs supporting community action groups. Under the review process, it was clear that from then on, even if money was set aside for specific projects, organizations whose activities were deemed directly related to their mission would receive core funding. However, it must be said that the process of classifying these organizations led to many squabbles.

We must also consider all issues pertaining to self-financing. Since the government's financial resources are clearly inadequate to ensure basic funding for equality-seeking organizations, how can we select which organizations will be entitled to such financing on an equitable basis? How can we grant core funding while looking for other funding sources?

A special problem exists with respect to Quebec-based organizations. For reasons of culture and language, a large number of such groups focus their activities within a single province. Furthermore, for the same reasons, organizations based in other provinces...

• (1545)

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm sorry, can I ask you to wind up? We really are trying to keep these very brief, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lise Girard: I will then conclude with the last paragraph, which deals more specifically with solutions.

With regard to the issue of core funding, we believe Status of Women Canada should first get a substantial increase in its budgets. Women's Program budgets are far too small to support Canada-wide initiatives effectively. We are referring to a budget of \$10 million.

Subsequently a process could be established allowing at first to identify equality-seeking organizations, to review their mission and activities, and would then set criteria to be used in establishing their funding levels. The organizations themselves should be invited to actively participate in setting up such a process.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm specifically asking if you can keep your statements to a minute so we can have more opportunity for discussion and dialogue.

Ms. Hancock.

Ms. Joyce Hancock (President, Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women): I'll just build on what's been said.

In Newfoundland and Labrador in the mid-nineties, when we saw the sustained funding moved to project funding, we could really sense a loss in the sustaining work and presence of equality-seeking work in our communities and regions. I think the case has to be made for a return to core funding if we are really going to get serious about moving forward or advancing the equality of women in our provinces, territories, and country.

When the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers met in Newfoundland and Labrador in the fall, we gave you five demands for women's equality. One of those demands was to restore core funding for equality-seeking women's advocacy and anti-violence organizations. We maintain this is still the way to go. We're not going to see the advancement of women if we're moving from project to project.

In our province right now, \$65,000 a year is given to eight Status of Women councils, women's centres; but more and more we're asking who controls the equality-seeking agenda—project funders, or the contracts for service delivery. That quandary has to stop if we're going to see any kind of true advancement on women's equality. I'm looking forward to a discussion that makes that case.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Jacobs.

Ms. Beverley Jacobs (President, Native Women's Association of Canada): Good afternoon. I'm president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, and we represent aboriginal women across the country. We have provincial and territorial member associations from across the country, so each of those also has a relationship with Status of Women regionally.

We're finding that as a national organization, having no core funding or limited funding creates a lack of human capacity to keep up with everything. We always feel like we're running around trying to keep up with everything. We would like to be proactive rather than reactive all the time. In order to be proactive, we want to make sure we represent our women on a positive ongoing basis.

You've provided this questionnaire to us, but the amount of time that was given to do it on a national basis was limited. In order to give a broad picture of what is happening regionally and present our issues more appropriately, we would like to be able to respond to that by having brainstorming sessions on either a national or regional basis. Some regions are different from others in their relationship and in the work they're doing.

The annual budget of the Native Women's Association is only at \$2.6 million, and \$1.9 million of that is our AHRDA program, which goes out to all of the regions. So our core funding is probably around \$300,000, if that. So that's what we're dealing with on a national basis. We represent our women across the country and are

recognized as a national aboriginal organization, but we are doing the same amount of work as all the other national aboriginal organizations, with less money.

Thank you.

• (1550)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Marshall.

Ms. Kathy Marshall (Executive Director, Womenspace, Coalition for Women's Equality): Good afternoon. My name is Kathy Marshall and I'm the executive director of Womenspace. I'm here today representing the Coalition for Women's Equality.

The CWE is a national coalition of over 10 national equality-seeking women's organizations that have come together to strengthen the mechanisms for delivering women's equality in Canada, with core funding being one of those components.

I think that to have a discussion about core funding, one of the things we need to look at is that it needs to ensure continuous, stable, somewhat predictable funding for equality-seeking women's organizations.

In developing a new formula, there needs to be room for a combination of core and project funding—a portion of funding for organizational capacity and a portion for initiative-based work. It must recognize that projects do not necessarily always operate in silos, and that women's organizations need infrastructure in order to support their organizations—before, during, and after the projects for which they receive funding.

When we look at core funding, we need to take a look at where core funding should be limited specifically to women's equality-seeking organizations, and we need to develop some type of accountability framework that must be designed collaboratively between the women's program and the women's organizations across the country. I think that for change to happen, there needs to be a coast-to-coast conversation about the level of funding that is currently being provided to equality-seeking women's organizations in the country. To maintain equality for women across the country, we need to have core funding reinstated.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. McCardle.

Ms. Laurie Ann McCardle (Executive Director, Women's Network of P.E.I., Women's Network Office): Thank you.

My name is Laurie Ann McCardle and I am the executive director of the Women's Network of P.E.I. Thank you for offering me the opportunity to present today and for your interest in core funding.

I represent an equality-seeking women's organization that in 1998, with the loss of core funding, experienced a complete staff turnover and near bankruptcy. With much hard work, we are now more stable, yet always in a fiscally precarious situation as we move from project to project. With project funding, we are able to make true inroads towards women's equality because we're more focused and outcome-driven with the accountability framework. However, with only project funding, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that we are an organization and more than the sum of our projects. Core funding is needed for organizational support capacity development.

As a not-for-profit, we're also an employer, and we need to be a role model as an equitable employer in order to have credibility. We are an all-women workforce, highly educated and trained, yet we work for lower compensation and benefits than others. Ironically, while we work towards parental benefits, we can't provide a top-up to our own staff. We work for economic security for all Canadians, yet we have low economic security ourselves. Core funding is critical to support women's equality work in Canada.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Parsons.

Ms. Doreen Parsons (Managing Coordinator, Women's Economic Equality (WEE) Society): Thank you.

Thank you for inviting me to speak to the important issue of core funding. My name is Doreen Parsons and I represent the Women's Economic Equality Society in Nova Scotia.

The WEE Society has worked for nearly a decade with project-based funding alone. During that time, we have worked with more than 5,000 diverse women, especially those challenged by low incomes and by rurality.

By definition, core funding underwrites the costs that are fundamental to an organization's existence. It ensures that a basic foundation is in place on which to build. It addresses costs associated with building capacity, becoming sustainable over the long term, and leveraging financing to support activities that advance women's equality. It ensures that women's organizations can pursue their missions, provide quality programs and services, and retain qualified and committed staff. Core funding indicates that there is value in the work of women's organizations.

Without core funding, staff are employed in short-term, non-standard, precarious employment, often without benefits or pension contributions. The complex process of developing project proposals takes place without financial compensation. The women with whom we work are provided with short-term support for economic security issues that require long-term consistent programming. Systemic policy and institutional issues that involve complex equity strategies remain undersupported.

Without core funding, we actually limit our ability to be visionary and innovative. The women with whom I work are creative, enthusiastic, and dedicated to building a holistic, sustainable women's organization. Core funding is needed to have a cumulative, long-term, sustainable impact on women's economic equality.

• (1555)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Prentice.

Dr. Susan Prentice (Member, Steering Committee, Child Care Coalition of Manitoba): Thank you.

I'm here on behalf of the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba. We're delighted to have the chance to speak to you about core funding.

I'll make the observation that advocacy chill is a very real phenomenon that all of our groups face. When you're doing explicitly change-oriented political work, and you don't want to hide that or slide it under in foundation and other forms of grant, it makes Status of Women funding particularly valuable. So I'm delighted to have the chance to talk to you about that.

I think that from our organization's perspective, we want you to be maintaining a combination of project funding and introducing core funding. Some of this would be made easier, we suspect, if you allowed longer multi-year projects and broader terms of what would count as a project. It would help us, I think, get more work done. But when developing longer-term or core or capacity funding—whatever you might call it—we would like to see the priority being federal or regional or provincial groups working on systemic change and gender equality. We would want a criterion to be that funds were going to organizations with democratic and accountable governance structures, including demonstrated linkages to lower level and grassroots organizations, in addition to proposal quality and track record.

I'll make two observations. One is that outcome measures—and that increasingly is how Status of Women grants are considered—are very troubling for change-oriented organizations like ours. If we don't build a universal child care system, it doesn't mean the project was unsuccessful or the group didn't do a good job. So my recommendation is that you rethink what counts as outcome measures in ways that reflect the real work that groups are doing. I'll make an observation, too, that some of your spending guidelines, particularly around salaries and per diems, need to be updated. They pose hardship for groups. They require women to subsidize their labour.

I would suggest—and it's a bit of anathema for a researcher to say this—that you might want to shift your funds from the policy research fund into the women's program, so that they're going to more grassroots groups and to work.

I will tell you, too, that there's a debate going on in Status of Women across Canada about whether or not child care is still eligible for Status of Women funding. We've heard from both the Atlantic and the prairie region funders that now that there is SDP funding, child care might not need to be funded by Status of Women. I'd make the point that even if there are child development funds in other places, the kind of equality-oriented, policy-oriented work of child care advocacy still needs to be funded by Status of Women.

Thank you.

The Chair: Ms. Sayo.

Ms. Cecilia Diocson-Sayo (Executive Director, Philippine Women's Centre of B.C.): Good afternoon, everyone.

I'm quite delighted to be here. I've been to several hearings of CIC and HRSDC and also have had consultations with CIC with regard to the situation of the Filipina women in Canada today. I would like to echo what the previous speakers have said with regard to core funding, because we also need core funding.

We had core funding from the provincial government of B.C. for the last 10 years, but two years ago it was terminated. We really feel the impact on the work that we had been doing on the ground.

The Filipina women came to Canada over 30 years ago, and now we're the fourth largest migrant group in Canada, third in B.C. The majority are women, and the majority have come and worked as indentured servants in Canada. To have core funding is very important for us. We have only scratched the surface of our work towards women's equality in this country. Our women have come with education—they're skilled—but Canada has actually deskilled a lot of our women. I think it's really important to continue to do the work among the Filipina women, not just in B.C. but across Canada.

That's why it is really important for us to see core funding from the federal government. We are going to struggle as much as we can to get that core funding also from the provincial government. So I hope that in the future we are not only going to be seen as domestic workers or caregivers in Canada but also as women who are here, and also that we are going to have the same benefits and rights in Canada.

Thank you.

• (1600)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Suek.

Ms. Bev Suek (Chief Executive Officer, Women's Enterprise Centre): I'm Beverley Suek. I'm the CEO of the Women's Enterprise Centre in Manitoba, and I'm representing the centres across western Canada. I share all of the concerns that have been brought up here by people who are in equality-seeking groups. I've spent 30 years of my life doing those kinds of things and I understand the frustration, particularly around project funding. Somebody said that who directs what you're doing is who pays the bills. And I think that project funding is a real disadvantage to women's organizations because you have to play to the funders, which is a problem.

Ten years ago, when I was asked to chair the Women's Enterprise Centre in Manitoba, I think all of us thought we had died and gone to

heaven, because we were offered a five-year core funding agreement with Western Economic Diversification. We worked with them to develop the accountability measures that made sense to us and made sense to them. We could have project funding and do have project funding. In addition to that, we have benefits, we have pensions, we have maternity leave and parental leave, and we think it's great. We're in the midst of negotiating our third five-year agreement, and that's a bit of a trial—but that's another story—but it seems like a reasonable way to go. And I think if it's been done, there's no reason it can't be done again.

In terms of solutions, I think there are three options. One is long-term funding, which is either three or five years. I love the five-year thing. I think the government should fund any organization that can harness more than five volunteers, because you're getting a lot of money for very little money. And I've never understood why the government doesn't see that as an extreme benefit—that if you get five people who are going to work for free, you can't fund one person to organize them. And the third solution is setting up some kind of foundation. I always advocated for their putting millions of dollars into a women's foundation as opposed to an arena, but arenas seem to be more popular. So I think taking some of that money and saying that our priorities are about women who are in violent situations, and women and children whose lives are at risk—if that's our priority, that's where the money should be.

That's all I have to say.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Taylor, go ahead, please.

Ms. Sharon Taylor (Executive Director, Wolseley Family Place): Hi, I'm Sharon Taylor, executive director of Wolseley Family Place, located in the inner city of Winnipeg. Our demographics are single-parent families, women between 18 to 34 who have children between the ages of zero to 12. Less than a fifth of my budget is designated as core funding, and that designation comes out of a children's mandate, not a gender equality-seeking mandate. The majority of my funding is project funding, which is provided by the federal government, the province, private donors, foundations, and businesses.

My presentation today to this panel is about the incredible complexity, challenges, and demands of project money versus core money. The only way I can describe the complexity and challenge is to provide a profile of a woman who utilizes the services and programs of Wolseley Family Place, a voluntary-sector organization such as ours. Wolseley Family Place is a family resource centre. This is the profile.

I have two profiles of women who are utilizing our services at present.

One woman was born on a reserve in northern Manitoba. On her way to school she had to cross two rivers. One day on the way to school crossing the rivers, her sisters attempted to drown her. They didn't need any more sisters. This left a big scar. Often as a child, she was left to find food, and many a time she was hungry. As an adolescent, her coping mechanism was sniffing. She became a foster child. She was brought to the city and almost completed her grade 12. She needed a math credit to graduate. She became pregnant at 16 and had three children. All three children became the wards of Child and Family Services, and the children were placed for adoption. She was charged with assault and went to jail. She was an angry young woman. She then met her current partner, became pregnant, gave birth to a girl in 1997. Their relationship is one of togetherness and periods of conflict and violence.

This is when we met Susan. She came for parenting classes and to reduce her isolation. She wanted assistance with her baby, as she was overwhelmed with the responsibility of her new baby but was determined to keep this child. Susan now has had two more children in the past six years, and she's determined to keep her children to create a family. However, the father to the children is abusive and violent. He is incarcerated approximately every six months for assault, and when he gets out he seeks to find Susan and pushes in the doors and walls to her new home. She has been kicked out of 10 apartments in the past six years, and because of his destructive behaviour, she is on the brink of becoming homeless as it is more and more difficult for her to find affordable, adequate housing. She struggles with a gambling addiction and clinical depression. Yet she is a survivor. She is a good parent. She is a woman who has survived systems that failed her.

As an NGO that serves Susan, we work to plug the holes in the system. This is policy change. This is challenging people and systems about structural inequalities. It is long-term work, not project work.

I could go on to another story, but I'll just sum it up.

As you can see, this illustration speaks of the complex set of factors and conditions that the families experience. It illustrates how our social policies fail women and children. It illustrates how programs must be holistic and sustained. Not only does Wolseley Family Place grapple to meet the complexity of the needs, we work diligently to bring awareness to institutions so that their policies and programs can meet the needs of the women. It is about safe, affordable housing, gendered addiction treatment centres. It's about anti-violence work. All of us have the responsibility to create a safe and welcome environment in which women are not judged and are treated with respect and dignity. It is dealing with the root causes, not the symptoms.

• (1605)

In order to form a trusting relationship with people who utilize our services and programs, we need to maintain infrastructure and reliable, trained core staff. This is obtained through core funding. Long-term funding is necessary to make a difference.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you all for your presentations.

I am going to propose, to be fair—we've never done it in quite this format before—that we follow the speaking order of the four parties that are represented here. I suggest that the first round be in the order that we speak, which is the Conservative Party, the Bloc, the Liberals, and then the NDP. I'm going to ask that these rounds be no more than five minutes, and shorter if possible, and that includes both the questions and responses.

I'm going to ask the questioners to direct their questions to where they want a response. After the first round I'm going to open it up for cross-discussion, and I will keep a speaking order as I see the hands go up.

Ms. Smith, go ahead.

• (1610)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you very much.

I want to thank everyone who is here today for the presentations you've given. They were extremely valuable and very compelling.

You know, the value of having you here today is in hearing from the grassroots organizations that have the expertise on core funding. Some of the information you gave us is extremely helpful in showing the direction we should go.

I was very interested in Bev Suek. Some of the things you said were very commonsensical and made a lot of sense, because you talked about setting up a women's foundation and you said that would be much more useful than the way it's done now. You like the long-term funding, which makes a lot of sense because you can plan.

Can you explain to me why the foundation is so much more useful? I know the Women's Enterprise Centre has been extremely beneficial to women in Winnipeg, and I dare say my own daughter went one day to get some information from the enterprise and found everybody very helpful. Can you tell me what you meant by that?

Ms. Bev Suek: I guess I'd like to have control of it. That's the bottom line. I think we'd all like to have control of it.

Mrs. Joy Smith: So you're a control freak?

Ms. Bev Suek: I am, actually, and I make sure those staff treat people properly, too.

The thing about a women's foundation is that it would be in perpetuity, so you would put a bulk of money into it but it would roll over, which is very much like the loan fund we have with the Women's Enterprise Centre. It's in perpetuity, so we can keep rolling it over.

The other thing is that it's sometimes easier to make a pitch for money once rather than for core funding on an ongoing basis. And it's about who makes the decisions. I would rather have the people who are working at the grassroots making the decisions about who gets funding and who doesn't than have changing bureaucrats in organizations deciding.

The hard thing when we are negotiating our agreements is dealing with somebody who doesn't understand what we're doing. My preference would be for a foundation that would core fund everybody that needed core funding.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you very much. I guess it's something we could talk about for about half an hour or even longer to get all the details.

I want to direct a question to Susan Prentice. I thought there were things in much of what you were saying, Susan, that were very useful. But one thing in particular that I thought was extremely insightful, and something we should pay attention to, is what you said about outcomes, and how we should rethink what counts, and that the grassroots should be the decision-makers. Can you expand on that a little bit more to clarify what you meant? I thought that was very important.

Dr. Susan Prentice: Thank you.

In addition to a shift from quarter project funding, the last couple of years Status of Women has also gone to outcome-based measures. Like most women's organizations, we're quite in favour of accountability measures. We like to prove how effective we are and what good value we produce. But some of the ways outcome measures get applied tend to disadvantage groups. For example, if you can't build gender equality, eliminate violence, or in our case build a universal child care system, a project can be deemed unsuccessful.

We're in the middle of negotiating right now in a capacity-building project around what adequate outcomes would be, and we're having some discussions with our project officer about what counts as adequate outcome.

I would second the call others have made that in a consultative form you'd probably be able to generate outcome measures that work to provide you as funders with accountability, and that work for women's organizations to really measure the kinds of outputs we're trying to produce. It's probably a different notion of outcomes than traditionally gets applied in other sectors, but it would be a better and more efficient way to demonstrate accountability.

•(1615)

The Chair: Thank you. I think that just takes us to the end.

Madame Brunelle.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Good day, ladies. It's a pleasure to meet you.

The committee is very concerned about funding for groups. We all know that funding is everything. With a budget of slightly over \$10 million, Status of Women Canada certainly doesn't have much, Canada-wide, to support all of these groups. You know that this committee asked for a 25% increase in its budget. It hasn't yet been implemented, but women are resilient. We're not about to give up.

Regarding funding, I read your recommendations attentively and saw that core funding is important for several of you. However, it would seem that project-based funding is an asset to others. The question on everyone's mind is whether you believe there should be two forms of funding available, based on the group in question?

For instance, I was reading that it is difficult for women's advocacy groups to organize fundraising events, because they cannot issue tax receipts as a charitable organization. Should these groups

receive core funding while project funding should be made available to other groups?

I'd also like to hear your comments on long-term funding. We know that there is nothing worse than having a project for one year which doesn't come to fruition and then having to come up with another good idea for another project. It becomes a very cumbersome process which may well disappoint a number of women we had intended to help.

I'd also like to hear what you have to say on provincial funding. We know that the government of Quebec is involved. What is the situation in the have provinces? Do women's groups receive support?

[*English*]

The Chair: Who would like to respond to that?

Ms. Hancock.

Ms. Joyce Hancock: I think there has to be room for both. I think of the equality-seeking organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the longest-operating women's centre in the country has been there for 35 to 36 years, in St. John's, Newfoundland.

But if our women's movement is going to move forward and continue to make changes, there has to be room for other women's equality-seeking organizations to access funding to do their work on a project basis and later move to a core-funding status. It has to be ever moving forward rather than, here are some groups, you get the money, and that's the end of it.

I'm not a proponent of saying it has to be merely provincial, because I know about the sustaining presence of equality-seeking women's organizations on the ground. I worked at one for a dozen years in western Newfoundland. We simply had those few sustained dollars, but we also accessed projects. Both are critical and important. There's no problem with accountability, but I don't think it can be so concrete that it becomes only project or only core. We need both.

The Chair: Does anybody else want to respond to that?

Ms. Critchley.

Ms. Debra Critchley: I agree with Joyce. I think there needs to be a process and mechanism set in place for core and project funding. I also wanted to respond to the part of your question with respect to provincial governments.

In British Columbia, after Secretary of State switched core funding into project funding, the only core funding our women's centres—there were 37 of them—received came from our provincial government. Our provincial government eliminated 100% of that core funding April 1, 2005, and put nothing in its place, seriously jeopardizing women's centres. A number have closed, and many are just operating on borrowed time.

I have to tell you, I don't know other regions of Canada, but I certainly know that in British Columbia women's centres have been and continue to be one of the strongest voices for women's equality and have been front and centre in a lot of that work. So it's really had a huge impact on what's happening in British Columbia.

• (1620)

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll have a brief response from Ms. Jacobs.

Ms. Beverley Jacobs: I think what happens is that as a national organization we have volunteers. All of our boards all across the country do work on a volunteer basis, so that would assist in the core funding on a national basis. With the way the provincial-territorial member associations are, the actual service delivery to our community...that is where I know there's some project-based funding that would assist them really well in what they're doing. Again, they're talking about multi-year, because they're having to stop and start all the time and that causes disruption.

The Chair: Thank you.

Just a very brief comment, because we're at the end of our time period. But go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lise Girard: I simply wanted to follow up on the comments made by my two colleagues. I believe that we do indeed need to maintain core funding and project funding.

For my organization, project funding allows us to set out specific medium and long-term outcomes. On the other hand, we also need core funding, because women's advocacy work requires constant monitoring of what's going on politically and in the news. We need this level of flexibility, this leeway, aside from our projects, to be able to do effective work.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Torsney.

Hon. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Thank you.

Certainly, I'm glad we're having this panel. When we were listening before Christmas and trying to start our work, the issue of core funding was really front and centre. Governments from time to time have core-funded organizations. Certainly the demand is great. It seems to me that we need to figure out the formula. How do we do it? Is it a population base? Is it that there should be a women's centre for every 5,000 people, and it needs \$1,000 to run on an annual basis? Is it that there are programs? Is it that where you have really great programs—like the one you've described, Ms. Taylor—they should be the standard for all communities, and you guys are already up and running so we need to establish that elsewhere? Is it that we set the money up against certain goals, as I think Ms. Prentice had mentioned?

What are the mechanics of it?

The need is huge. We could say that we're going to have a women's centre for every so many Canadians and that they will achieve certain goals in terms of equality. In different communities that's going to mean different things, however. The people who carry

that out may advocate positions that some of us don't like. I think in the case of Ms. Critchley, certainly sometimes governments change stripes and they don't like the organizations that are advocating for change, and that's a bit of a challenge as well.

I'm looking for the mechanics of how we actually decide, because it's not just women's organizations; it's women's equality-seeking organizations. That's where we get into some challenges on the funding issues. How do we decide? If we're going to say some kind of formula, what are the goals that we are funding against, and how do we measure the outcomes those organizations are working toward?

Dr. Susan Prentice: You're asking, of course, the hardest question. I think you would get generally broad buy-in across the country if you were to acknowledge that your first priority for core funding or capacity funding should be targeted first to national or regional organizations that are working on gender equality and systemic change at a policy level.

I think that still leaves room for direct service and for smaller-level groups, where project-based funding may be more appropriate and where provincial funding might be more available. But it seems absolutely essential in a country like Canada that our national, pan-Canadian organizations that work on policy change have a sustained capacity.

It will be no surprise to you that over the last six years, the Canadian Child Care Advocacy Association has nearly closed twice because of a lack of funding. This of course would have been a disaster. When organizations like that don't have infrastructure, I would say they should be your first priority.

• (1625)

Hon. Paddy Torsney: Okay. You've named one organization. When the others are answering, can you name organizations? Let's call them what they are, so we know what we're talking about.

Ms. Debra Critchley: I think what Susan was saying is important; however, I think it's missing a huge piece of the on-the-ground, grassroots work that happens, and when we're talking about women's equality-seeking organizations, from our perspective we're talking about grassroots work that happens in rural pockets throughout the country. I think that's really critical, and if the move is to only provide core funding to national or regional organizations, then you want to talk about a power struggle and who has control of the agenda. It won't be women in rural communities; it won't be aboriginal women. It will be, in my province, the Lower Mainland and Vancouver.

So you're leaving out a huge piece. We've had this discussion many times in British Columbia, trust me, particularly when we lost our core funding through the province.

I think it's critical that the core funding be provided through Status of Women Canada to women's equality-seeking organizations only. I don't believe this pocket of money should be used for service provision, because there are other pockets of money available for service delivery. One of the jams we've gotten into in terms of advocacy chill is that governments, both federal and provincial, have been pressuring women's organizations to do service delivery, and for many equality-seeking organizations, first, that's not where our strength is, and second, it's not going to produce the kinds of outcomes that have an impact upon women's equality issues.

There are other pockets of money for service delivery. When we're talking about issues like violence against women and all of those issues, I think if the money is attached to equality-seeking activities for equality-seeking organizations, you're more likely to be able to tackle the root causes of those issues.

If you're busy as an organization providing front-line service delivery, then where are the resources or the capacity within that funding to do some of the policy work, some of the work that we know is, at the end of the day, really going to have an impact upon change?

The Chair: You brought up a lot of issues, so I let it go for an extra minute, but I would ask you to keep your responses short.

I have Ms. Suck and Ms. Sayo, and then I'm going to move on to the next questioner.

Ms. Bev Suck: The dual roles of service and advocacy in women's organizations has I think always been a dilemma. You can't be the kind of organization Sharon talked about without doing some advocacy. It's very hard to separate those two, but I think in funding we need to look at two different kinds of things: the policy-seeking advocacy groups and how you fund them, versus the direct service that turns people's lives around. Those two things are different, and as soon as you start putting them together too strongly you get a lot of opposition, because they don't see the service part of it. People lose sight of it.

I think separating those two things is pretty important.

Ms. Cecilia Diocson-Sayo: I think it's really important to look at core funding, because from our experience, we are also able to do other work. In fact, we're able to do research at the ground level, using the participatory action research model, because what we see with the project funding is that if there's no more money to implement the action plan, for example, what are we going to do? The research will just stay there and gather dust. So I think it's really important that the core funding will be able to facilitate also the work on the ground, to be able to present this to the communities, to the women, that this is what we have done, even if the project funding is over.

I think it's really very critical, and I don't see that as an isolated part of work. Core funding can also do support and services. From our community, we need support and services critically, because we really are so disadvantaged and marginalized.

So as much as possible, we do the work that we need to do. In fact, I'm an executive director, but I'm not paid as an executive director, and that's really a shame, to do the work to advance women's equality and there's no core funding provided for me. I still

have to work and do my nursing job and, at the same time, do my community work. It's really very frustrating.

• (1630)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thank you.

Thank you all for your presentations.

Just as a quick preface, I don't remember where it came from, but it has been clear from research and from women's groups that unless we have vibrant, healthy women's organizations, not only do the women's organizations and women in the country suffer, but democracy suffers.

The issue around core funding has come up consistently. It seems to me that actually we have the wrong question before us. It seems to me that we shouldn't be talking about what the elements are of what we institute in core funding, because the elements are always going to change. It's going to depend on what's happening in the country and what the social context is and all of that. It seems to me that what we should be talking about is the process. How is it that we talk about core funding with government departments and politicians? Who needs to be at the table? How does that happen?

Even in this process, I must admit that although we struggled to make this more collaborative and inclusive, I find this process not very solution friendly. So I wonder if somebody would be prepared to talk about what you think a process should look like.

Joyce.

Ms. Joyce Hancock: The process has to have a few layers. One of the things that have always bothered me...and I've been 30 years at this stuff now, from the women's centre to a more provincial perspective, and the National Coalition of Advisory Councils has been looking at it from across the country. I think we have to have a collaborative process.

There's a difference between consultation and collaboration. We always accuse our provincial government of having changed from one that was a little bit collaborative for a few years to one that's consultative like a dog-and-pony show: tell us what you want, and then we're going to go away and do what we think is best for you. But I think you have to engage at that level.

One of the things that I think Status of Women Canada did wrongly was to start to talk about gender equality. We weren't nearly there on women's equality when they started to shift, and then in the back doors came people saying, well, we're working on gender equality; we want some of that pie. So we moved away from talking to the grassroots groups and national and provincial groups that talk about women's equality.

We need to go back to a process that might look different in my province; it might look different in a territory or a bigger province. But what would be the process in terms of how funds were directed?

Right now, in our province, we have a program officer who works on the ground with groups to try to help us through that mire of projects, and then in the region we start to talk about how to keep that process working. But if we're going to move where you want to, we have to go back to that and see what it would look like in our provinces, but have the criteria attached to it. What's wrong with saying feminist, equality-seeking women's groups?

I spend most of my time now going back to organizations and saying, teach us again how to talk the way we did 10 years ago about feminist equality-seeking work and stop being afraid of that.

The Chair: Any comments?

Ms. McCardle.

Ms. Laurie Ann McCardle: I think it's important to collaborate, to have conversations on the ground with women at the national, regional, and provincial levels. We need to be in touch with equality-seeking groups with a chance to have input that's really heard and that gives us a meaningful voice. That would be a starting point.

Ms. Debra Critchley: By the time I get home to British Columbia tomorrow night, I am going to have spent 26 hours travelling at a cost of \$1,200. If we continue to hold consultations only in Ottawa, then the message you're sending to western women is that what they have to say doesn't really matter. It excludes grassroots organizations that have no money. There was no government funding attached to this consultation.

• (1635)

Hon. Paddy Torsney: I have a point of order. We paid for you to come here.

Ms. Debra Critchley: No, you didn't. The B.C. Coalition of Women's Centres paid for me to come here.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: Can you clarify this point? It's very important.

The Chair: Anybody who asks for support to come here will get it.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: There are forms that will be distributed.

Ms. Jean Crowder: On a point of order, I'm wondering how information goes out to organizations. Even people coming to this meeting were unclear about how the meeting was going to be conducted and whether their travel costs were going to be paid. I think we need to reflect on how this happens.

The Chair: I'm not sure that's a discussion point. We can speak to you afterward. Let's try to keep it on the core funding.

Ms. Debra Critchley: With respect to process, we have to create a framework for the discussion. But prior to that, we have to create a framework for who's going to pay for it and what that's going to look like. It needs to be inclusive. We want to ensure that grassroots feminist organizations surviving on borrowed time are not excluded from these discussions. We should put this critical piece in place before we start framing the actual discussion.

The Chair: Mr. Powers.

Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.): We appreciate the responses to the questions. In the first section, there were two questions with regard to the current funding. Are there any clawbacks from any of your partners with regard to

funding? I've come from municipal life, where there are often clawbacks. We give you \$10 and we take back \$8. In all cases, you get to keep your funding envelopes?

Yes? Okay.

My next question is, do you want to return to core funding rather than maintaining the current practice?

Dr. Susan Prentice: I would like to see project funding as well as the restoration of core funding. I think that's what all of us would like. No one has spoken against that today.

Ms. Sharon Taylor: We have to have core funding for an infrastructure, but project money brings in new ideas and new partners. It's not the exclusion of one or the other. The core has to be there for us to take project money.

Ms. Joyce Hancock: This would also leave room for new organizations to grow. When I was trying to teach our new minister about the status of women, I said to her one time, "You're not the minister of the women's movement, and I'm not the president of it. We're both here to make the women's movement in Newfoundland and Labrador stronger". It's not going to happen with just a few core dollars for a few organizations; it has to continue to grow.

Mr. Russ Powers: Let me revisit my question then. In view of my first one, I got a yes response, and then there was a pregnant pause. Do you want identified core funding with the ability to supplement it with project funding?

Ms. Joyce Hancock: Yes.

The Chair: Ms. Taylor, and then we'll move on to the next one.

Ms. Sharon Taylor: I would also like to add that core funding gives us leverage to be able to leverage other dollars from other sources. We can't exclude that. It allows us an opportunity to have some leverage.

The Chair: Ms. Girard.

• (1640)

[Translation]

Ms. Lise Girard: Obviously, if we reinstate core funding, there is one crucial question, i.e. the Women's Program funding which, over 20 years, has fallen by \$2 million. It now stands at only \$10 million. If it is impossible to substantially increase this budget, it is completely delusional to believe that we will be able to obtain core funding in an effective way.

I think that's my first question. We wouldn't want all of this work to go to waste again. We've been asking for a budget increase for years now. In actual fact, there's been a decrease.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any other comments?

Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you.

My question is directed to Sharon Taylor. I was very moved by what you said, by that real-world example of the wonderful work you do in your organization for people who really need it. When you talked about the complexity of core funding money, it seemed to me from your comments that as much as you appreciated any money, it was onerous to get through to the money for what you really need.

Can you expand on that just a little bit more, Sharon?

Ms. Sharon Taylor: I've been in non-profits for about 25 years. It was interesting, until I took this position in 1998.... All of a sudden, you're seeing a real shift to project money.

What I mean about it being really onerous is that it seems that the NGOs end up training staff so they can go to government or to the private sector. So I get to keep staff, I train them for a short period of time, and then they're gone. That's one thing that's onerous.

It's always constantly looking for dollars. The needs aren't going away. If I do a project, I create a demand. Then the project is gone, and that staff person is gone. Now I'm at the point where I hire generalists. When I look at a resumé, I make sure the person has the skills to do anything and everything so that I can maintain them from project to project.

Another thing I've noticed, as far as project funding is concerned, is that we have a tendency to see that because this year this person is funding this kind of project, we must apply for funds there and change it a bit somehow.

I've received some funding from various sources for three or four years, and then they tell me they cannot fund us anymore. I think that when we're dealing with people with very complex lives, it isn't short term. Their problems are long term. They are systemic. To try to do a project on that is impossible. I even question this as far as being a change person goes. Is that my role, or is life a process? And how do we support people where they're at and what they're at?

I don't know if I'm answering your question—

• (1645)

Mrs. Joy Smith: You are.

Ms. Sharon Taylor: —but it's continuously administration. I feel as if my whole job is ethically down the tube sometimes.

I went to a Christmas party recently. There was a fellow there who was the CEO of a large corporation. The only thing I could think of was that I must talk to him, and not because he was a person I wanted to get to know, but because he may have had access to funds.

Who wants to do this job anymore? I feel that, more and more in non-profits, we're seeing women being the executive directors. Now we're supposed to be the manager of the project, we're supposed to find funds, we're supposed to do the frontline work, and the list goes on. When does it end? When are we valued for what we do in the non-profit sector?

We are the third largest sector. We are not a burden on this society. We do provide to the economy. We are trying to provide a better world. I'm going on a rant, but it's very frustrating with project money. Every year I'm looking at somebody and thinking, "Oh, Jean over there, I wonder how she.... I have to talk to Anita this week".

Staff, participants we're serving, and funders, I think, must get really tired of seeing us and hearing from us about core funding and always feeling that we're looking for a handout. I feel they're training us to know what it's like to live with the people we're serving, that we're very similar to them—"Give me a handout, I need it".

Mrs. Joy Smith: Thank you. You've explained it very well and I appreciate it.

The Chair: Ms. Parsons, you wanted to comment.

Ms. Doreen Parsons: Yes, I think it's a values issue. As governments move to a business model, where we hear of competition and innovation and developing partnerships and diversification and, obviously, an economic bottom line, this requires incredible skill and time and effort to work within this framework. Yet that's the part that isn't funded, that time to work within the framework to build the partners and diversify. The issues are quite significant for those of us who survive on project-based funding.

From a staffing or human resource perspective, as you mentioned, you train staff. You hire women who are very skilled and train them, and not only that, they love their jobs and do wonderful work. Then they're terrified that before the 12-month period is over, they're going to be laid off, and there's no bridging money so they can be hired again if you happen to get funding.

You're writing proposals on weekends and in the evening because you too are working on project-based funding, and it's very cyclical. The demands it places on the existing staff are significant, and trying to manage and administer an organization without those supports is significant. For an organization to be able to plan is close to impossible over the long term because you go into cycles of having to develop significant proposals.

I think it's important to note that the skill that is now required to actually develop a proposal is extreme, so to retain the qualified people needed to do that kind of work is also very significant.

You have cycles within non-profits now. You have one year when you're writing so many proposals and building the proposals, and then the next year, when they're funded, your staffing levels go up, and then they go down again. It's quite a difficult situation, then, to be able to deliver any kind of sustainable program.

The Chair: I have a long list of questioners, but I also have a long list of people who want to make a comment, so I would ask if you could make your comments fairly brief.

I have Ms. Jacobs and then Ms. Sayo.

Ms. Beverley Jacobs: First, I wanted to thank Sharon for her human story and for presenting that to us, because it does talk about the complex issues we're talking about, specifically for aboriginal women. We're talking about a history of colonization and also talking about the skill that's needed in order to develop proposals. It is a skill, and there is training that's required; in order to have proposals developed, you have to have people who have that skill.

I know the Aboriginal Healing Foundation did provide training dollars for people to develop those proposals. I think it's a good idea to also use that as part of funding in order to assist our organizations to develop that skill, because it is required.

I just wanted to make that comment.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have Ms. Sayo and Ms. Marshall, and then I'll move to the next questioner.

Ms. Cecilia Diocson-Sayo: I think it's really good to hear the discussion, because some of this is not even what we do in our centre. We focus our work on how to survive, to be able to continue, and we advocate for the rights of the most marginalized women in this country, migrant women.

I think we need to also look at ourselves and at where we're going. Core funding is a political issue, and I think we would like to hear from you all, parliamentarians, that you have a commitment. We are going to bring this issue to our communities, and we are going to tell stories about our experience in Canada and how we are being treated and marginalized. Every day we face systemic racism.

With so many professional women in our community, do you think we don't know how to write project proposals? We spent our time writing project proposals, and when they received our project proposals, they commended us on our project proposals and said they were very good. But where's the money? We don't get the money because we don't have that kind of money in our centre. Some foundations are required to have at least over \$200,000 to get \$10,000. Isn't that ridiculous? That is ridiculous.

I spent the whole year last year working on a proposal. It was very good, but it was back and forth, back and forth, for over one year. We still didn't get...where we're at right now. They have to return our proposal and say what they need from us.

You're talking here of process. It will take years before you can even get \$30,000. That is really ridiculous. That is the kind of story we have in our community, and our community is the most underfunded community in Canada, the immigrant community, despite there being almost half a million Filipinos here now in Canada.

The majority are women. The women who are at the forefront in advancing the struggle of the Filipino community in Canada must really be given that opportunity. They are the ones who are really going out there and organizing our community so our next generation will not suffer the kind of dehumanizing situation we have right now.

I just want you to hear this and make you hear what we have to say as a community, because core funding is a political issue.

Thank you.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Marshall, and then I'm going to go to Ms. Yelich for her questions.

Ms. Kathy Marshall: I just wanted to echo what Cecilia said, that core funding is a very political issue. When we're looking at it, we absolutely need to have dialogues across the country with the grassroots organizations and make sure the guidelines that are put in place for the initiative-based funding are guidelines all women's organizations see and adhere to. Right now the guidelines are different from one organization to another in terms of what gets funded.

The hiatus of the funding between when your last project ends and your next project begins is absolutely atrocious. Womenspace is an organization that's part of a coalition, and we've been negotiating our proposal for months now and have not received funding since last September. There are huge issues, and I just want to make sure they stay on the table.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Yelich.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Yes, that does sound rather difficult.

I just want to pick up on...is it Laurie Ann, from British Columbia, who spoke?

I'd like to know, from all of you maybe, what you see as.... As Joyce said, let's go back ten years. Do most of you have that much history with this core funding? All of you do? Okay.

So let's go back the 10 years. What's ideal? I'm thinking, where's the province in this? What should the federal umbrella group be? I'm trying to pick up where Paddy was coming from, I think. What do you represent—provincial bodies, or regional bodies? What department are you hoping to access? What is your ideal infrastructure? What is your picture of the way you should work? Should you have a provincial body to go to that is perhaps overseen by the federal government to make sure funding is in place, and then have the provincial body deliver it? Is it policy-making? In your mind, what exactly is it that you are asking for?

There's both the project and core funding. I can understand. I think you can't do one without the other. I think if you have a good project it can turn into core funding, and you need core funding for the long term. But I'm still wondering how we would do that. Should we have the provinces more involved?

You mentioned that British Columbia has cut your funding but that it was the federal government that cut you off first. You said that about your funding.

Ms. Debra Critchley: The history was...I mean, they didn't cut it, they shifted it.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: They shifted it. Okay.

Ms. Debra Critchley: It was the Secretary of State before it was Status of Women Canada funding. It was core funding, and then it was shifted into initiative money. In the meantime, the provincial government provided some core funding to women's centres in British Columbia, and then continued to provide that funding and, over the years, increased it to the point where it was \$47,000 for each of the women's centres when it was cut.

I'm being distracted by the light and members saying, "Are we supposed to be somewhere?"

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Oh, there's a vote?

•(1655)

Ms. Debra Critchley: I think it would be dangerous for Status of Women Canada to turn the administration of federal core funding over to the provinces. I think what we need is something that's federal, that's consistent. We all have Status of Women Canada offices in our regions, which some of us have relationships with. But I think turning that money over to provinces is wholly inadequate.

And I think the other piece that's missing.... I was here in October 2003—when I first met Anita Neville, actually—and there was a group of us from British Columbia having discussions with MPs and ministers about the elimination of provincial core funding in British Columbia, because we thought that Canada signed on to CEDAW. They have, but we thought that when they signed on to CEDAW there would be a federal mechanism in place to ensure that provinces didn't bail, and that was okay. We came to Ottawa with the expectation that there was some piece of information we would get, that there would be some conversation that the feds would be able to have with the province about its record on women's issues, only to find that there really is no mechanism, and that it's out of everyone's hands.

That's not to say our efforts in coming to Ottawa were not successful. They were, in many respects. Status of Women Canada, as a department, did provide some emergency funding for women's centres during that initial crisis. But quite frankly, we were shocked that a province could say to women's equality-seeking organizations in their province, "You know what? You're too noisy. You're a pain. You challenge policy. Our lives would be much easier if we just stopped funding you, and then maybe the bulk of you would go away."

We found it shocking that the federal government played no role when that happened. It was as if the federal government was a silent witness to the demise of women's centres in British Columbia. That's not okay. It's not okay that those mechanisms are not in place, and it's not okay that the feds haven't played a lead role.

The Chair: Ms. Hancock.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: One of you had mentioned that you do have partnerships with some businesses or companies. I would like to hear if you do have partnerships and if sometimes that's negative, because the government might say, well, if they give you so many dollars then perhaps we don't have to pony up. I want to know if there are any agreements with the private sector at all.

Ms. Joyce Hancock: Some organizations in our province do that, and often there's that abrogation of responsibility from the province. I would echo what you're saying, because when you think about even in ten years, the losses.... I worked in a women's centre and I now chair the advisory council of my province. We have a very unique relationship; we're often acting like an umbrella organization for our women's centres. After the Status of Women Canada moved away from that sustained funding, we were able to get the provincial government to fund some of our women's centres. They're now becoming very precise with funding you. They're now doing government department work, and the advocacy and quality-seeking

activism is starting to disappear. You can read your newsletters and see it move, so I don't seek at all to see that kind of responsibility given to the provinces. We're only as good as a flick when the government changes and they decide—

•(1700)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: But in your province you have a very successful status of women department that, I understand, you do a lot of work through. They're not really connected to us, right?

Ms. Joyce Hancock: No, but it's like having two separate pieces. We're finding now that the louder the organizations are getting around advocacy, they more they are in jeopardy, so they're soft-peddling. From just one budget speech to the other, the work of advocacy has disappeared, and it has become moral support to women in our province. They play with the words.

The Chair: Ms. Prentice and Ms. Taylor, go ahead, please.

Dr. Susan Prentice: I'd like to return to my comments about advocacy. It's quite true that there are some groups that can find partners, and sometimes there are partnerships that can be built with the business community. We've tried to do that as the Child Care Coalition, and I'm please to say, on the status of women project we did last year on child care in the city of Winnipeg, which Anita Neville participated in, we were able to find partners.

On the whole, political change-oriented, equality-seeking work is unattractive to the business community, and it's unattractive to many foundations. There are few places where funders will support change-oriented work. I think all of us would agree that it's hard to find money for political work, so there are few sources of funding, and the business community is unlikely to ever be a very strong ally of the women's movement.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I would like to ask you, since you're both from Manitoba, what you represent here today. How will the national day care that has been announced in your province affect you? Will you be out of a job?

Dr. Susan Prentice: Will I be out of a job?

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I just wondered, because is this not what you want, the national day care? It was announced in your province, and in my province.

Dr. Susan Prentice: I would like a national child care program for all Canadians, for all women, and all children, all across the country. Until we get that, the work of child care advocates will not be complete.

The Chair: Ms. Taylor, go ahead, please.

Dr. Susan Prentice: But congratulations on signing some of the bilateral agreements.

Ms. Sharon Taylor: Lynne, I was one of the ones who spoke about having partnerships with business. I think some of the concerns that I have with business are with the ethics—we have to consider the ethics—of who we receive funding from as far as business goes, and how it applies. Most of the time, the funds I have received from business have been short-term, small grants, not large enough to sustain us. Also, as a small province, we don't seem to have the power. Corporations and businesses do not want to fund a grassroots organization like ours, in particular—we're not a national one—because they want to increase their profile. They want to increase their image, so they want a national program. Sometimes it's very difficult to solicit funds from business. We receive very small funds—not enough to keep us going from year to year.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Girard, go ahead, please. And then I'm going to move to Ms. Crowder.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lise Girard: During my presentation I also referred to a sector that has been developing over the last few years: private sector partnerships. This is an area of expansion for us. It took us four or five years to develop it enough so as to have a reasonable level of funding. I think this year we will have generated \$80,000. Considering our budget, this is a significant amount.

Obviously, there is some give and take in the agreements we have with our partners. They take on our cause, but at the same time, these companies are seeking out visibility and want to be known by our clientele. They're private sector companies. They exist to make a profit, and the money they give to us is part of their public relations, in a sense.

I think it is possible to develop this type of partnership while maintaining adequate limits. We have set out some criteria. I know that currently, we are trying to develop effective criteria. On the other hand, I don't think that developing partnerships with the private sector means the government has no responsibility in terms of pushing for women's equality in Canada. In my opinion, equality is a political issue. Private sector partnerships should in no way take the place of these commitments.

• (1705)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Crowder.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Thank you.

I have just a quick comment about accountability. I want to come back to sustainability around funding.

There has been a continuing challenge around accountability of federal dollars that flow into provinces, and British Columbia is a really good example of how not to do it. The early development initiative was funding that was supposed to increase child care spaces. In British Columbia we actually saw cuts to child care subsidies and spaces, so there was no accountability for the federal dollars. That's my rant on that.

Ms. Diocson-Sayo was asking for commitments from politicians around core funding. I am committed to continuing to work for core funding, and I want to be publicly on record for that, but I have to add a caveat. I want to see women's equality-seeking organizations at the table working with the Status of Women on developing guidelines and what the program should look like. Too many times, women's organizations come cap in hand asking for limited dollars and have no input on how that money is allocated. I don't want to just see core funding without that kind of input and involvement of women's organizations.

I want to come back to sustainability. I met with a women's transition centre when I was in British Columbia last week. They're in the unenviable position of having had funding for a couple of years to develop some very innovative housing for women, and now they're looking at sustainability. They've put all the effort in the front end, and now they're supposed to find somebody to help them sustain the funding on it. I'd like you to comment on this, because they're supposed to go out and find private sector partners that are willing to help women who have been drug-addicted, or whatever, and the businesses, quite frankly, aren't interested.

So can you comment on this push for sustainability?

Ms. Bev Suck: Years ago we did a study on corporate giving for Secretary of State, when it existed. Corporations give to sports and arts. They don't want to be identified with wife abuse shelters or drug-addicted women, because it's a marketing tool. They do it for marketing, so they don't want to be identified with something that's not a positive, uplifting sports thing.

You get the project funding for one or two years. You do something innovative and get people all excited about it. It's often federal money, and then that collapses. The province feels like they're supposed to pick it up. They're really upset because they're not intending to pick it up, and the whole thing falls apart. I think this has happened to probably every organization that ever existed. You get something really good going, and it falls apart because it's only supposed to be a project.

The Chair: I will now go to Ms. Critchley, and then Ms. Taylor.

Ms. Debra Critchley: I think the whole question of core funding speaks directly to sustainability. I know that early on after the provincial government in British Columbia pulled our core funding, we were in the early discussion stages with HRSD about bringing in an 18-month program at our centre, and that became the question. You don't have core funding anymore. How do we know you're going to be able to be here 11 months from now? Why should we give you money if your organization is going to collapse 18 months from now? We could show them no infrastructure dollars. We could show them no administration dollars. We were paying our rent by crossing our fingers and hoping that the fundraiser we had planned six months from now was going to be enough money to cover it.

I think the other really critical piece about that—and I know this is very political, and I know what I'm about to say is very touchy—is that when we look at reinstating core funding, once again providing service money to a transition house without requiring that organization to be doing violence prevention work, outreach work in the community in raising the awareness about the root causes of violence, without requiring them to do what is often in the category of the advocacy chill, then at the end of the day it's band-aid money. If there's no requirement for them to address those issues, then that is 100% service delivery money, and we don't think Status of Women Canada should be funding service delivery in that manner.

There needs to be a requirement to address feminist, women's equality issues. And further—and here's the really unpopular one—not all women's organizations are women-only organizations. Not all women's organizations are operating on feminist principles, and so we need to have a very frank discussion about what that looks like, and what it means. There are many women's organizations across the country that are no longer women only, and the hierarchy in those organizations is predominantly male, and they're not women-centred, and they're not women-driven. And just because they have the word “women” in their title doesn't mean that they're equality seeking.

And so that's part of the discussion we need to have, and for me the toughest part of the discussion is identifying that.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you.

I have Ms. Taylor, and then Ms. Prentice.

Ms. Sharon Taylor: I think, Jean, when we talk about sustainability, it isn't about self-sufficiency. That's the point to me. And let's redefine sustainability. What is sustainability? Sustainability is not always about the bricks and mortar, and looking at just that facet; it's about people's lives and how has that created a better quality of life. That's sustainability.

So it's redefining it, and that's where it comes into the outcomes. Let's look at the outcomes and what are realistic outcomes, not grand outcomes that we can't achieve. I think what we need to do is not sit there and say that sustainability is about my being self-sufficient next year or two years from now, because these issues have been long term, and long term means that we may have to follow people's lives for a long period of time.

The Chair: Thank you, Sharon.

Ms. Prentice.

Dr. Susan Prentice: To refer back to Jean Crowder's question, one comment I would make around process is for this dialogue to continue post-today in our various.... I research in this area, and I would be pleased to provide you and your research staff with documents. I've just finished a marvellous book called *Nonprofits for Hire: The Welfare State in the Age of Contracting*, which I hope you'll read, and I know in the voluntary sector there's a very important study by Katherine Scott *Funding Matters*, which I hope you'll read. And if you ask us, there will be other good advice around the table that we could also share with you that can help inform your deliberations.

The Chair: Thank you.

Anybody else on this?

Then I'm going to move to Madam Bonsant.

[Translation]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Good day, ladies.

This is a financial question but I wouldn't want you to be offended. From the very start, you've been trying to survive to keep your offices open. How do you monitor progress for all of those people who have used your services? Do you follow up with these women, or do you not have the means to? Where are they now? Given all of the effort you've made, can you say there's been a change? I am very curious to know what happens to people who have made use of your services.

[English]

Ms. Cecilia Diocson-Sayo: I'll give you a concrete example of how we work at the centre. We work seven days a week. We work even late at night in order to be able to support the women.

One of the things we have done over 10 years of work is to support and advocate for the Filipina nurses who have come here to do domestic work in Canada. These women are needed here; we know very well that we have a nursing shortage in this country. But there are thousands of Filipina nurses across Canada who are doing domestic work and 24-hour home support work.

Our work was supported by the Status of Women at the regional level. We did a study about their situation, and then after that we were able to program some of the things that we needed to do in order for us to bring them back into their profession.

So this has been a 10-year work that we have done at the grassroots level. British Columbia has already benefited from the work we have done. To tell you the truth, there was no money given to us after the research.

I must say we are proud of our work as Filipina women because we believe that our liberation is inextricably connected to the liberation of women in Canada. If we continue to be marginalized and down at the bottom of the ladder in this country, there's no liberation or there's no emancipation for women in this country. That's why I think it's really very important. We have supported over 160 nurses to go back to their profession through our own efforts.

This is what we mean by advancement. This is what we mean by equality-seeking work at the grassroots level. This is our contribution to Canada. This is our contribution to the women's movement in Canada, to the women of Canada. We have so many we have supported, even families of women who have come here and are still working as domestic workers. For them to be able to even understand their settlement and integration in Canada is a very important part of the work we do at the centre.

If you want to look at how to measure it, it's also quite difficult, and sometimes your measurement tools do not fit with the work we are doing on the ground. It is so difficult. You want to put everything in a box, but you can't, because our work is sometimes outside the box. So I think we need to also look at what some of these best practices are that we are talking about. We're always confronted with this, and we're always being told that what we're doing is not a best practice. What is a best practice for women? We have to continue to look at our own context, our own history of why we're still struggling for equality and struggling to uphold the human rights of these women.

I could tell you more stories. We're here because we have stories to tell; we have issues to present to you. I don't know what kind of measure you still need in order for us to get that very important funding that we need for our work.

Thank you.

•(1715)

The Chair: I have a speakers list, Ms. Yelich. I'll let you comment on the list in a minute.

Ms. Hancock.

Ms. Joyce Hancock: In answer to your first question, I think there are lots of examples of success. In our province we've had projects to get women more involved in the resource-based sector, bridging programs. At this point we have 300 women who are now entering training courses that have that.

But to build on your point, I think with equality issues there's an ever-shifting sand, and sometimes it keeps moving. The political climate moves. Women's equality issues move. In the area of my province, when I moved from western Newfoundland to the city to take up a provincial position, we didn't have food banks. We took issue and made a presence to talk about...you know, why would we need food banks in a province so rich in natural resources? But now equality-seeking groups spend time trying to help women access food banks, access court.

Our systems have been impoverished. Now in Newfoundland and Labrador people are starting to migrate and move towards the cities because of health care issues, so our women's groups then start to try to focus on those. So that core funding helps women...I don't mean that we want to continually chase that, but we have to be both reactive and proactive, and if you're not there you can't do that. Sometimes we're all that women have, because the political will shifts and changes. And whether it's the fishery issues...our rural and remote parts of Newfoundland and Labrador are being depleted, and sometimes the only thing left is a women's group or women's centre that works with that.

So I think we have to have that presence.

•(1720)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Yelich, you wanted a comment on this.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: My question would have been, then she does have a measurement? That's what I want to know—what is the success of the ones who have gone on and got their nursing career? She said there are 160 who have gone through. When she comes to fill out her form for project funding, does she get merit for that? She cannot be called a failure because some of them did not become nurses.

I'm thinking we have a measurement, but I'm just not sure what measurement. Is her idea that she can't get any more project funding unless she puts nurses through? I want her to expand on that.

The Chair: I'll move along on the questioning.

Is there anybody further who wants to respond to Madam Bonsant?

I'm sorry, I didn't see you, Susan.

Dr. Susan Prentice: Thank you.

Sometimes their work is directed at individual women, and we can track how our women are doing. My organization works on policy. Last May we issued a report on child care in the city of Winnipeg. We argued that the City of Winnipeg has a child care crisis. It needs to understand it. It needs to understand the social and economic impacts. It needs to recognize disparities and it needs to do something about it. Now it's eleven and a half months later and so far the city has not done anything about it. You could say by one measure we failed.

On the other hand, we've done consultations, we've produced research, we have an advisory council, we've created interest, and we're beginning to mobilize child care in the urban agenda awareness. By a narrow measure, did we change the City of Winnipeg's child care policy? We failed, right? It's eleven months later and we haven't changed the policy.

It very much depends on how we determine what is a successful outcome to know whether or not our work has been successful. That's my point about measures.

The Chair: Ms. Jacobs, and then we'll move on to Ms. Torsney.

Ms. Beverley Jacobs: When you start talking about measuring outcomes and determining whether or not we know we're making a change to a woman's life, there are specific outcomes. You could say if a woman was in a violent relationship, if she's out of that violent relationship and she's living a healthy life, that is an outcome. It's a measure. If a woman who has been on the street, is homeless, and through an ARDA program or through a skills program she's able to move out of that life and she's able to have a skill and be employed, that is an outcome. It's a measure that her life has changed in order to be better for herself, her family, and her community.

To me those are the things we do, and we do them on a national basis, on a provincial basis, on an urban and rural basis. If we have the funding to be able to do the research to determine the numbers, if that's what's required, because this is something that we've been doing with our Sisters in Spirit campaign.... Part of what we've been doing since we started the proposal.... There have been up to 40, just since we started the proposal, in the last year, who have been missing or found murdered. Is that an outcome? Is that something we want to measure? That's what we want to change.

The Chair: Go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: I didn't want a measure. I wanted to know whether after having worked so hard with these women, you are able to track their progress so they don't fall back into that rut. I endorsed a budget increase. I even suggested \$40 million, and people looked at me in shock. But that wasn't much, I should have asked for \$60 million to strike a good balance. We know that battered women have a tendency to fall back into the same pattern. Do you follow up with them—psychologically speaking, socially or otherwise—so it doesn't happen again? Do you make sure that the women who have managed to get out feel good about themselves? Measures... Getting them out of a bind once is a step in the right direction, but do they carry on with their lives.

• (1725)

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Critchley.

Ms. Debra Critchley: It's an interesting question. I can only answer it from the perspective of a women's centre, specifically mine.

No, we probably don't do follow-up, because part of what we do is crisis intervention and referral. We would refer a woman wanting to leave a violent relationship to a transition house. There she would receive shelter services and any connecting counselling services she wants.

As to ensuring that in three or four years the situation is not different for her, that's why we're committed to doing systemic change work. We believe the big-picture answer is to increase women's economic equality, to end discrimination against women, to challenge welfare rates that starve women and their children, to change the present system. We're working to create a Canada that makes things safer for them, for all of us.

This is what is so critical about Status of Women Canada's funding. It is the only pocket of funding I'm aware of—and I've been at this job for a long time—that allows you to delve into the issues of systemic change, into social justice issues and discrimination against women. We get no other funding, nor have we ever, and our organization has been in Vernon for 35 years.

The B.C. Coalition of Women's Centres current initiative with Status of Women Canada is to increase the public discourse on violence against women in British Columbia. It's a perfect example of commitment over the long term. We know it's going to make it better for women.

Ms. Sharon Taylor: When we're talking about outcomes, especially with women whose lives are very complex, we have to

be cautious about what we consider an outcome. If my only result is that a woman leaves an abusive relationship, I am setting myself up to fail. It might be the first time she acknowledges that she might be abused, or that she might be dealing with many other things, like housing.

To establish criteria for outcomes, people need to sit down with those of us who are working on the front lines. I'm cautious about numbers. What does it mean to say we got 50 people off social assistance if the next month they're all back on? It's not realistic.

In every case, we need to sit down as a group and find out what we can accomplish, or what the woman can accomplish. She is the driver of her own destiny. We're market-driven now, but being made to show outcomes we can't attain ensures that every one of us will fail. That's why I want to emphasize cautiousness when we're looking at outcomes.

• (1730)

The Chair: Ms. Girard and then Ms. Torsney.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lise Girard: We talk of women as individuals, but it is also important to bear in mind women's collective evolution.

Sometimes it is difficult to measure short-term results in the women's movement in Canada and in Quebec specifically, that I am most familiar with. I know full well that women in Quebec didn't have a right to parental authority before the review of the Civil Code in 1970. They weren't considered persons in the eyes of the law. Women who worked alongside their husbands in the family business received no recognition whatsoever.

As a result of recent discussions regarding a parental leave scheme and the reconciliation of work and family life, I believe we are now starting to see evolution for women thanks to these changes. It is a long and exacting task. It cannot be measured in days or years, but rather in decades.

Today, one of the issues we are very concerned about is that of the invisible work of women. Women give birth, women create society, women are caregivers, and they do so often without any compensation whatsoever.

We understand the fundamental nature of the economic system we're living in, where things have an economic value. The women's movement plays an important part in the evolution of people's mentalities in this respect. These changes are visible.

Quite recently, we were invited to a television show on the work of women who raise their children. Only five years ago, when we would take part in this kind of open-line show, the comments we would hear would be to the effect that that type of work was a private matter. People said that it was an agreement between partners on how to raise their kids.

Today, we can say that things have totally changed. All of the people that took part said that it was clearly a significant social contribution which had to be recognized. That is how the change in mentalities is perceptible as well.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to move to Ms. Torsney, who has been waiting patiently.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: I think there are a lot of great ideas around the table and there's a lot of energy in it. I hope you sense the commitment that all of us—most of us—around this table have in terms of trying to advance this issue.

The challenge is how we ask and encourage the Minister of Finance to establish funding for the equality-seeking organizations and our expected outcome. It seems that a lot of the things we've been describing are different programs—programs to make sure women have jobs skills, programs so that women have settlement services, programs to prevent violence against women, programs for women leaving incarceration, programs for women entrepreneurs. Different areas of government are responsible for delivering in each of those areas.

I think what we're hoping is that Status of Women will be funding groups that are working to enhance the dialogue, to create the social infrastructure in our communities so that everybody understands why it is important that women have equality, so that my city council understands it, so that my Rotary Club is thinking about it, so that in designing any policy, across any department, people are getting it.

That, I think, is something we could encourage Status of Women to fund, and we could encourage the Minister of Finance to fund Status of Women to fund those organizations.

I'm trying to figure out how we establish the funding for that action. I think Ms. Critchley has identified that maybe everybody who gets money to deliver support to women who are in violent situations should be out advocating. Maybe that's the part we fund, because some of the items that people have talked about are really provincial areas of funding. They're not federal areas of funding, and we're not going to take those over.

And as much as I would like to attach, in a number of areas, real strings on the money we give to some provinces—now my colleagues across the way are going to be very upset—because sometimes I'm not sure they have the same goals, we don't need to enter that debate. But we certainly could say that if we have a transition house for women, they may be the group that applies for the funding under a program that we establish and they could be the ones we give federal money to to do the advocacy.

Maybe we need to say that in terms of Canada's social infrastructure, in terms of creating the debate within the country, we need to have, per 1,000 Canadians or per 50,000 Canadians, so many dollars established so that we can raise awareness and advocate and then ask groups in the country to submit. So Ms. Critchley will submit for her community and Ms. Hancock will submit for her part of Newfoundland. Maybe you have to develop policy or show that you've worked on submissions at city hall or you've gone to schools to talk about the issues or you've spoken to so many Rotary Clubs or something. Maybe that's how we foster the debate.

The other part of that debate is that it's almost like an Auditor General function. Sometimes we certainly have some issues in Ottawa related to the Auditor General and we get caught up in saying, the Auditor General said you guys screwed up in this area. But that's appropriate; that's what the Auditor General is supposed to

do—ask for continuous improvement. Maybe what we're asking women of equality-seeking organizations to do is ask for continuous improvement in Canadian policies. Maybe that dialogue is going to be uncomfortable sometimes, and maybe you're going to be in the adversarial position and sometimes it's going to make us look awkward. Maybe that's okay. We may need to enhance the dialogue.

And I'm probably taking too long in terms of my dialogue.

I was there in the early days when we took office in 1993. I was the chair of the women's caucus when the National Action Committee on the Status of Women would come and sometimes scream and yell at us, and it wasn't very helpful. And the guys would say to me, "Why would I show up for that again? That was horrible. They just attacked the government".

It is sort of an Auditor General function. Let's enhance the dialogue instead of creating "gotcha" politics or creating a situation where you say we need more child care spaces, and we say we have problems with delivering that right now because we have funding issues, and you say you need more, or you say you need more transition places for women, or you need to work against violence and we have certain laws that need to be changed, and we say we're working on that, or we disagree in the way to accomplish that...

• (1735)

But it's okay that we have this dialogue. The problem is sometimes—not just the guys—people ask, why would you fund those groups that argue with you? So that's where we have to create a dialogue. Maybe we could work on that together where, if we do get the funding, you point out that it's a healthy kind of environment.

But I'm still stuck on how we establish it. We set up the New Horizons programs to increase access for seniors to our community; we set up a certain amount of dollars on a per capita basis and people compete to deliver those services. Is it that we make sure there's regional representation, that it's going to be different in different areas?

In my community we have Halton Women's Place working with women who have been abused. It's a shelter that was supported by our business community. They have fabulous fundraisers that everybody wants to be at. The Rotary Club funds, and everybody scrambles to deliver more services because they are attracted.

So what do we do exactly in terms of delivering services?

Mr. Russ Powers: I've been told to vote yes.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: See how we work together?

The Chair: Ms. Critchley and then Ms. Hancock, go ahead, please.

Ms. Debra Critchley: Thank you.

I understand bureaucracy well enough, I think, to know how this is posing a challenge. But I also know it can be pretty straightforward. I think we go back to setting a framework of criteria, that it be women's equality-seeking organizations, that there be criteria in terms of whether they can demonstrate that they operate in democratic ways as an organization—that set of criteria.

I don't think the criteria need to be hugely broad, but I think they need to be broad enough to bring in new groups. Then I think it's a process of Status of Women Canada putting out a call that core funding is being made available, to a maximum of x dollars—and if you talked with us later, we could probably give you an idea what that number might be—and organizations can apply for it. I think once you are successful in getting the core funding, then it's a matter of hammering out a continuing agreement with the federal government, with reporting requirements every six months or one year. As someone stated earlier, I don't know a women's organization that is not committed to being held accountable. We know what that looks like, and we're quite capable of doing that. And that's that.

Alongside of that, you also have the current initiative funding that's in place, with maybe some feedback about outcome measures and some of the language used in the application process.

I also think—and I don't want to add to the wish list—particularly in terms of rural women in pockets of the country, some money also needs to be built in for writing the proposals. People laugh, but we shouldn't, because it can take an organization, particularly a first-time organization, three or four or five months to really understand the language that's being used, understand the process, and be able to frame their idea or their organization in a way that then makes sense to the funder. There need to be pockets of development money. An organization that may have no previous history at the Status of Women, that has never filled out one of their applications before—and trust me if you've never done it and you see it for the first time—is going to think that it needs a team of lawyers and a bunch of consultants to get through it. There needs to be that development money so that we're not creating money that then becomes sort of elitist in that the long-standing feminist organizations of Canada are the only ones that are able to access it. We need to build in ways of ensuring that emerging groups and new groups on the scene can really access that money.

In British Columbia when we did have core funding under a different government, we operated on a continuing agreement, and it worked very well.

● (1740)

The Chair: Ms. Prentice, and then Ms. Suck.

Dr. Susan Prentice: I've have two very different observations. One is that you're asking to take up the challenge of doing social monitoring on the government's behalf. Nobody could doubt that

this is a demanding, highly skilled job that you wouldn't rely on volunteers to do without core funding. That's my first observation.

My second observation is a little more philosophical. I'm a big fan of government. I think government has the capacity to do things that none of us can do alone. There are economies of scale. I'm in favour of more and better government. I don't want to devolve all of this. My organization tries to get government to step up to the plate on social policy, to take over what should be public responsibilities. I'd like to do myself out of a job as a child care advocate so I could get onto other issues.

So some of this is a dual-pronged operation, and I wouldn't want to have to do one over the other.

Ms. Bev Suck: I think I'm getting too old. I've felt my whole life that I'm on the outside knocking on the door to get in. I guess when it comes to advocating and whatever, I still feel like I'm on the outside.

I don't know the answer, except getting more women into politics and chairing whatever. It doesn't feel like the right solution. All of us want to be valued, and I don't think there's an understanding of the value of what we do and how important it is to the Canadian economy. We want respect. We want to be involved in making decisions, not advocating to get other people to make decisions for us. That's the frustration of being an advocacy group. We're not sitting in as decision-makers, and that's frustrating.

It's also a matter of priorities. I chaired the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation, which brought in \$5 billion a year and paid the government \$425 million a year. A lot of it went to professional sports. They gave the Blue Bombers \$100 million a year. It's a matter of where we're going to put our money, and I'm just tired of fighting from the outside. I want to be in.

● (1745)

Ms. Joyce Hancock: I'm not going to say what's been said, but when I was listening to you speak, I was just looking up at the boys in that picture. I think it's called democracy. There are so few of you on the inside pushing for an equality-seeking women's agenda. We need that valuable voice, that grassroots voice, that national voice, that reasoned voice of a women's perspective to bring our concerns forward in a place of influence.

Having more women in decision-making is only one piece of it. We have to be constantly increasing the capacity of individual women in women's organizations to look at the world with their women's eyes, their women's vision, and their women's experience to discover how to influence all layers of decision-making. We should always be considering funding and fundraising. When I worked at a women's centre, you could always get money for the shelter, the abused and battered women. The businesses would step up. But if you try to get money for a women's centre that's fighting for equality and a place at the decision-making table, the businesses say, "What's wrong with you?"

It's not fair to ask us to compete with that work, the show-us-the-bruises stuff. It might be the media rant, but it's not fair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Powers.

Mr. Russ Powers: My comment, Ms. Suek, is, just think of the alternative to getting old. It's not great.

Ms. Bev Suek: You mean getting young?

Mr. Russ Powers: That's not the alternative.

What I'm finding, and I've felt it before and I think in an indirect way you've said it, is that there's just so much on your platter. We and the provinces and the territories and business—everything is pulling you so many different ways you just can't do the job you really want to do.

I don't have a definitive solution to it, but maybe in this ongoing discussion with regard to core funding—and I'm a firm believer that you clearly need a more than fair share of core funding to carry on the job—the rhetorical question that goes with it is, what is the job? And maybe what the job is in Newfoundland and Labrador is different from what it is in Manitoba or Ontario or whatever the place is. Perhaps the broad definition can answer that; then maybe the ensuing dialogue is about who is going to do the other things.

Ms. Prentice, you referred to the philosophical discussions of things like that. Perhaps the parallel process is about who's going to do those other things to carry on what you've indicated, Joyce, needs to go beyond just your own community and your province, and things such as that.

I don't have a solution and I'm not asking you for a solution, and I didn't figure we'd come up with a solution after this round table or the next round table. I don't think we can narrow our focus down, but I think perhaps we could break it, if it's possible, into bite-sized, manageable pieces. I find that if there's an issue that's national in scope, it takes forever to come up with even just the minute, but if you break it into manageable pieces, then they're what we can deal with. Maybe what we do is look at how we can make a substantial impact that can benefit you collectively, in the shortest term possible, so that we—I'm using the broad "we"—can make our pitch, or in other words, we can justify.

Our asking for the enhancement of the 25% funding envelope was just asking for 25%. We felt that it justifiably needed an increase, but we weren't able to dot i's, cross t's and say we need \$10,000 here, we need \$50,000 there, and things such as that.

So maybe what we need to do is to break it into manageable pieces. As Ms. Critchley indicated, collectively, probably, standing in a corner, you could tell us how much more you needed to make it meaningful out in Vancouver—or Beverley, from the national perspective.

Maybe I'm just totally rambling. Is there somewhere that perhaps we can—

A voice: Yes, really.

Mr. Russ Powers: I'm likely rambling—unlike Paddy, who was clearly on her message.

Are there any comments, please?

• (1750)

Ms. Debra Critchley: I think the first response is—and the women sitting over here will know exactly what I mean when I say this, because we've been hearing it and saying it for 10 years—we're just doing the work, so give us the money.

You say let's define the work. The work is not so easily definable. It is region to region. It is organization to organization. It's defined locally, provincially, regionally, and nationally. For some organizations it might be having a strong focus on policy work. For other organizations, it might have a stronger focus on the women in their community and providing some services to women. But that's the nature of change. It has to be happening in a whole bunch of different ways, on a whole bunch of different levels, for it to have the impact that we need it to have.

One of the problems with the initiative funding is that we were often required to define something that isn't so easily defined in communities. It's also asking those questions. It's also assuming that we're speaking the same language. We're not always speaking the same language, depending on which organization you're talking to and which level of government you're speaking to. At the end of the day, we know what it looks like in our communities. We know what the work looks like. We've been doing it long enough to be able to define it in a way that is acceptable to federal governments so that we can move on and get the funding into organizations that we need.

I'll give you a very personal example. I work 35 hours a week. Of those 35 hours, 10 hours are funded through the Status of Women Canada initiative, the BC Coalition of Women's Centres, where I play a key coordination role for the coalition, which is a provincial organization. And 6.5 of my hours are funded through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. I work 6.5 hours of 16.5 hours on a program called enhanced drop-in services for women, where we're doing community coordination on homelessness issues and providing free shower and laundry services for women. The other 16 hours a week that are funded, formally, are funded through Status of Women Canada. We're on the third year—we have multi-year funding—of a women's poverty project where we're increasing the awareness in our community and region on the issue of women's poverty and doing an analysis of provincial legislation with respect to eligibility to welfare, and all of the things connected to that. The other six hours a week we hold fundraisers like the Vagina Monologues in our community, and that's what funds the other six hours. In my normal work day, I may or may not provide direct service to women, or I may spend three days providing direct service to women. Defining it is very, very difficult.

• (1755)

The Chair: Thank you.

Briefly, Ms. Diocson-Sayo. I have two more questioners, and then we're going to conclude.

Ms. Cecilia Diocson-Sayo: After listening to all these conversations, I think there are many of things hanging up there. I'm really concerned that we are going to be pitted against each other because they're not very sure about what we're doing here and what is going to happen. I think our understanding to come here is to really look at core funding, which is so critical to a lot of women. You should also consider disadvantaged women in Canada and support their struggle for equality. Again, I don't want us to be pitted against each other, because in this work and on this whole perspective we're always being isolated and not taken very seriously. We all need support, as women, especially those who are being marginalized.

I hope this will be part of the criteria when you plan for your core funding.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I have Ms. Karetak-Lindell next to ask a question. Go ahead, Nancy.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Thank you.

I'm Nancy. I represent the riding of Nunavut, which is the largest geographical riding in Canada and the most isolated, so I'm very interested in hearing what you're all saying.

What strikes me is that you're picking up where every system has failed somewhat. The systems that have failed all have core funding, whether federally or provincially. The system's having somehow failed a whole group of people is where you come in. Why you wouldn't get core funding because the other core-funded agencies or departments are not working is beyond me, but I'm trying to get past that.

Then I'm trying to figure out how you would not, in a system in which you're allocating funding, as we heard, pit people or groups against each other. What all of you are doing is all a very worthy

cause. I don't want to use the word "cause", but for lack of a better word, I will. We need to reward you, again for lack of a better word, for being the safety net for systems that are failing people.

Where I come from it's been different things. It's been different systems imposed on us that failed us, or in adjusting to new realities of today. Our transition hasn't worked well. There are any number of reasons that systems fail. I look at programs all the time. We're trying to do skill training for adults because the education system hasn't worked the way it should for our people—you know, a lot of aboriginal people; I represent mainly Inuit in my area. Some of it's cultural, some of it's language barriers. There are very many different causes.

Anyway, I want to get to the point that I think we have to start looking at giving core funding to groups like yours as investments, not filling in so the report will look good as to what cause you had. I think we need to change our way of spending money and view it as investments in people, so you're not just looked at as a non-profit organization trying to fill in the gaps in your communities. I think we need to change here in Ottawa—let's say, where people are writing out the cheques—the way bureaucracy thinks of how we spend money.

I was very interested to hear some of the outcome things. To get to my point, how do we change that thinking? Where do we go? How do we start changing how people look at a project? How do we change the thought that we're looking at investments in people, instead of just filling in the cracks? Ultimately—and I know you all know this—the more money we invest in support systems for people who have fallen through the cracks, the less it is in crime, in people being put in jail. Children have a healthier start in life. Those are immeasurable outcomes. In your dealings with the different groups, I'm sure you've dealt with every single pot of money available, and I'm just wondering how you start to change people's ways of thinking so that we're trying to be more positive and look at things as investments instead of as drains on the system.

• (1800)

Ms. Joyce Hancock: I was thinking particularly of the Labrador groups that we have worked with in terms of the Inuit and Innu women. I remember spending time in those communities over the last number of years since I've been with the advisory council, and women learning to be able to say, what makes you trust your systems, whether they're the Labrador Inuit Association or your male-dominated systems, any more than we trust the systems that were put in place and not designed by women? They don't work for women. It's like trying to get at that level of influence. Even our Inuit sisters would say that at the end of the day, with what's going to be there for women, discussions on land claims without any analysis are not a place that women want to be.

We started to talk about what they call cost analysis to show how you would benefit by a women's centre saving government dollars. That discussion worked, but it worked to our disadvantage. Now there are some core dollars for women's centres to do that work, but the impoverished systems have not responded in any way. All they've done is devolve it onto the backs of women who will often do it as volunteers and volunteer organizations.

I do think it still goes back to the value of advocacy work, because it's some of the best work you ever do. I remember sitting and getting clothes together in our clothing bank and talking about how we could get more women involved in the association when we were bringing in food banks so that women would be treated fairly and not have to line up so the whole town could see them. While we were doing poverty work, we were also doing advocacy, and we were also creating a voice for women who felt marginalized and voiceless. I think it has so many layers to it, but I don't think convincing government of our value worked.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Critchley.

Ms. Debra Critchley: I think this is a political issue, and so my answer is political. We need the federal government to show some leadership. We need the federal government to publicly stand up and talk about women's equality being on the agenda. We need the federal government to stop using language like gender mainstreaming, because every time those words come out of government's mouth it opens the door for the provincial and municipal governments in our communities to dismiss us.

It also sounds like a Status of Women initiative—how to increase the public discourse about women's equality issues in Canada—but really this should not be news to anyone on this committee. The women's movement of Canada has been asking the federal government to show some leadership for a very long time. We know some very hot political issues have been dealt with that way, because when you look at the level of marginalization, oppression, and discrimination that happens in women's lives on various levels throughout Canada, you can't expect that we're going to be able to rise above that and change people's minds. We need that to happen from the federal government. We need the federal government to value us before our communities will.

• (1805)

The Chair: Thank you.

Could we have Ms. Jacobs and then Ms. Suek. And then I'm going to move on to Madam Brunelle's final question.

Ms. Beverley Jacobs: I wanted to respond to your comments and questions because it's such a huge issue. We're talking about people's minds and changing how people think. We're talking about inherent racism, inherent discrimination, and people's minds. We may never change.

For me, what we can do is continue the work we're doing as an aboriginal women's organization. We'll continue to do the work because we feel the work for our women has to be done.

Our relationship with the federal government will continue, but that's a whole huge issue we're talking about. We're talking about education systems, the political system, and all these institutions that have been developed based on patriarchal values and white values, all of those things we always have to deal with as aboriginal people and as aboriginal women. We're doubly discriminated against, and we always talk about how we have to deal with things as women's issues and as cultural issues.

There are things that happened in the past to our people that haven't been dealt with, and these issues have to be addressed,

including land issues, residential school issues, and education systems. All of these things have to be changed, and how do we do that? We continue to do the work we're doing. If we get the assistance from the federal government, then we have the commitments that have to be made politically.

We have been asking for that as a national women's organization, for the federal government's commitment on the Sisters in Spirit campaign. We have been asking for that. Like somebody said, it's like we're constantly having to beg. We've become people who are begging for these things, and that has to end. That has to end now.

The Chair: Ms. Suek, and then I'm going to end this round and go to Madame Brunelle for the last question.

Ms. Bev Suek: I think it's very important that we change the framework. Maybe "core funding" isn't the expression we want to use; we have to bring the words "women" and "feminist" back into the vocabulary, but also "investment in women". Internationally, we know you invest in women, in communities, and in countries. In Canada it's the same. You invest in women and in what women do. You invest in families. Let's change the framework.

I'm tired of being the person with my hand out. I have heard so often from different government departments.... That's why I want to set up a foundation, because you have to convince so many different people of the value of what women do, and I'm tired of it.

What we do is so important, yet I'm always told we're a drain on the economy, that the kind of thing we do is just a drain on the economy—except for the Women's Enterprise Centre, which isn't.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Bev Suek: That's my other life.

But it isn't. I don't know how we get that kind of recognition that it isn't a drain; it really is an investment. We talk about that in an international sense, but we don't talk about that at home.

We don't want to look like we're people with our hands out either, but how do you shift that thinking? I think it's important that we all start thinking differently.

The Chair: Thank you. Thank you, Nancy.

When we finish this round and before I ask Madame Brunelle to ask her question, I'm going to just go around the room and ask for a very brief statement, recommendation, word of encouragement, or whatever you want to call it for the committee. Just think about that while we finish this last round.

Madame Brunelle.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: I would like to react to what Mr. Powers has said. He often makes me react, but usually, it is because of his good humour.

Women's groups do not need to justify their existence. I do not believe that any of you got up this morning telling herself that she was going to organize a women's group to combat violence and poverty. These problems of violence, poverty, homelessness and prostitution, as well as problems in the cultural communities exist. That is why there are women's groups. I believe they are best able to solve these problems, and they do so at a low cost. We are aware of the low salaries paid within these women's groups. We know that enormous efforts are made and a lot of money is spent on health care to save a child. Is human life of less value when that woman becomes an adult? I have trouble understanding that.

As far as the funding is concerned, we should perhaps rephrase the question and ask what these groups save the government. In this way, perhaps attitudes will change. Speaking of changes in mentality, I think that each and everyone of us has a responsibility to continue despite everything. We have to start anew everyday, get out on the road and explain the situation.

Today, I was surprised to hear that core funding would be the solution. I recognize there is also a need for balance. Part of it has to be dedicated to project financing. This kind of financing results in vitality, because it leaves room for ideas and new initiatives. Unfortunately, it also creates problems; we are finding this more and more. In any case, it seems to me that it is possible to see how, technically, we may better articulate the financing. The issue is seeing how many people are affected, as well as looking at the nature and the quality of the project. There must be a way to do so within the machinery of government. I clearly understood that first of all we must increase the budgets. That is what we are trying to do. Let us increase the budgets granted to women's groups. Afterwards, we will be able to see how to distribute the funding.

• (1810)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you. Rather than ask for a response to that, I'm going to ask each of you to give us no more than a minute—I'm sorry to confine it like that, and I think we've had a lot of discussion tonight—for a recommendation or thought on what you want to see us do. We will be having another round table next Tuesday with another group of representatives from across the country. I don't know whether the messages will be the same or not, but we'd like to hear from you.

I'm going to go in reverse order and call on Sharon Taylor. I know Sharon, and she brings much wisdom.

Ms. Sharon Taylor: I think we need core funding. We need to look at multi-levels so a group will be able to shift policy and focus on policy. You also have to give the service sector, the grassroots level, some way to be able to shift, because in order to shift policy we have to do it at all levels.

I guess that's how I'd sum it up.

Ms. Bev Suck: I think it's really important to understand that the advocacy policy part and the service part are two different but integral parts. Some organizations are predominantly advocacy, some are predominantly service, but the service are also doing advocacy. You can't always separate those things.

We need money at the Status of Women for advocacy policy, but we also need another mechanism for the people who are doing service and need to invest in the communities the way they do. But also allow them to apply for advocacy money to do the advocacy piece of what they're trying to do on the service side.

So you need to have both, but they need to be separate because of the chill Susan talks about. That's my conclusion.

• (1815)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Diocson-Sayo.

Ms. Cecilia Diocson-Sayo: I agree with what you have said. I think we have submitted our answers to the Status of Women. I think the response included a lot of issues and also criteria for funding. But I'd like to give you a positive spin, because it's also a product of our struggle, and the reason for my coming here and presenting a brief, and also briefly presenting to you the condition of our community.

I become sometimes emotional. When I'm in the Philippines it may be a different struggle altogether that I'll be waging, but here we have to struggle every day. In fact, systemic racism is enough for us to sometimes not continue with our work. But I think it's still very positive, because we have impacted a lot of Filipina women across Canada in bringing our issues to the forefront. Our struggle and our liberation are really important, as women and as women of Canada.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Prentice.

Dr. Susan Prentice: Thank you.

I'll make five points, under 12 seconds each.

We need core and project funding, and you may call core funding anything that's easier for you, including "infrastructure investment".

Second, whatever you call that core funding, its priority should be to groups that work on systemic change and women's equality. I would maintain again that the first priority, in the first round, will be umbrella groups at the federal, regional, or provincial or territorial level.

Third, you could move funds from the policy fund into women's programs—and please update your budget items to reflect current and real costs and expenses.

Fourth, if you develop an ongoing and consultative process, I think it's fair to say we will all work with you to develop the kinds of criteria and priority and meaningful measures that would work for you and us.

And finally, please confirm that Status of Women Canada will fund child care, even though both Atlantic and prairie people have said SDP should do it instead.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Parsons.

Ms. Doreen Parsons: I believe it very much is an investment in women and an investment in our communities, and I believe it goes beyond a social policy issue. I think very clearly it needs to be placed within also an economic policy agenda. We are invisible in that framework, and I think we have to clearly be there as well.

Core funding really does allow organizations to generate more and leverage more, and so we need to think of it also in those terms: that without it we actually have an inability to leverage further funds. Investing helps us to leverage more and to grow.

I believe the funding should be both core funding and program funding. I think we submitted this as well. It should be for organizations that address systemic change and women's equality. I believe also it should go beyond the federal and provincial level and should be directed at local organizations.

As far as moving from policy to the women's program is concerned, I think it should be moved from an economic framework into Status of Women Canada. I think there are many strong women's organizations that have incredible skills in this area, who should be at the table with you as collaborators to help guide this process. I believe it's very important.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. McCardle.

Ms. Laurie Ann McCardle: Thank you.

I'd like to echo the comments that have come before and say that in moving to core funding, the one thing I'd hate to see is us pitted against each other for limited resources. We all do extremely valuable work, even though we may take different approaches. It's really important for us to all be supported.

One of the issues in working with the business community is that most of us who do high levels of advocacy work then don't qualify for charitable status. Our ability to work with the business community is really limited when they can't get a tax break. There are also no good photo ops in doing women's equality work, so business again is not going to be so interested in matching up with us.

As Debra was saying earlier about how her funding for her own project breaks down, I'm an executive director and I work about 30 to 35 hours a week, funded from seven different projects. You can imagine how much work I get done in each one. All of those have outcomes attached to my salary as well, hence the dark circles under my eyes. Even when you're working like that, it's really difficult to find the time just to be the executive director.

That's where the core funding for our organizational support would be invaluable, to just free up that little bit of time so you could really do the work you're actually hired to do rather than be another project person.

Thank you.

• (1820)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Marshall.

Ms. Kathy Marshall: The Coalition for Women's Equality believes that core funding should be limited to women's equality-seeking organizations and agrees tremendously that there needs to be a coast-to-coast collaboration in terms of bringing that to fruition.

When you are taking a look at that, I would like to remind you that it's going to be extremely difficult to do this unless we get an increase in the budget for the women's program. As it's based right now, it's 51¢ for every woman and girl child across the country. If we could at least get that boosted to \$2, we would be seeing some pretty significant improvements.

I just want to echo everything my colleagues have said, and said so eloquently as well.

Ms. Beverley Jacobs: I wanted to say that aboriginal women do experience the lowest quality of life. There have been many statistics and numbers and reports that everybody knows about. It affects our children, it affects our families, it affects our communities, it affects our nation. From what we can see of the way the federal government is currently funding these women's organizations, our organization continues to reflect that, and it continues to affect our communities.

What we are asking is for you to make that positive change, to make the change to affect our women. It will affect our families, our communities, and our nations.

We ourselves, as a political organization, are ineligible for charitable status with Canada Revenue Agency, so we are very limited in being able to fundraise, and it makes us ineligible for any types of grants from various foundations.

I'd like to thank the standing committee for actually reviewing this issue and bringing it forward, and for allowing me to be here to present. I truly am hopeful that we can move forward in a process of change, and that this will be reflected in investing in us as we continue this work, because our work doesn't end.

Ms. Joyce Hancock: I certainly don't have any disagreement with what's been said, but I don't think it's acceptable that we just move from this to recommend juggling funds that are already there. I think we need a substantial increase in this.

What I want to say to you as the chair, Ms. Neville, is that a lot of us had lost faith in anything to do with Status of Women Canada or the department. We had seen the turn in the mid-nineties and realized we were just being treated like any other part of a government's agenda that was fiscally driven, and we knew that a fiscally driven agenda was going to hurt women, women's organizations, and certainly rural and remote communities.

I think this parliamentary committee has restored a lot of our faith and I hope something is going to change. Having this issue discussed in this way has really moved it forward—this, and the gender-based analysis report. I think we've moved on that and I don't want to see it go to waste. I think time is of the essence. We're at a really critical period politically, and I think it's time to make that move and call the question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lise Girard: I think I will repeat in part what I said earlier and what I heard.

I feel that the Women's Program should maintain its core funding and project financing. In my opinion, funds should be granted to all organizations working for equality, whether it is for services, for rights advocacy or for awareness. These organizations must also have deep roots within the community, and be recognized by their peers. What I have heard here proves it to me.

I think that while funding these groups, the government must at the same time recognize the expertise of women who are working in the field. I have been working with women's organizations for over 30 years and I have been able to see that they have the necessary expertise, that they are aware of the needs and that they are in a position to act. Moreover, most of the time, they act as volunteers. They have a right to be supported by their government.

I also believe, especially for project financing, that we should try and give the organizations the flexibility they need in order to do their work in the field rather than favouring the current management, which is much too restrictive. Moreover, we are working with program officers who, although they are efficient, are not always present from the beginning to the end of a project. In fact, it is often necessary to change program officers during the course of a project, which disrupts the work. We currently find ourselves in this situation, we are at the end of a project, and we have no designated officer. This has been the situation for a number of years.

I do not know what the solution to this problem is, but perhaps someone else around the table does.

● (1825)

[English]

Ms. Debra Critchley: I mostly agree with everything that has been said so far. I just want to focus on two things.

We strongly encourage support and will do whatever consultation work is necessary so that core funding can be brought back for women's equality-seeking organizations whose primary function is systemic change work.

We need to recognize also in this discussion, as Beverley was saying, that our aboriginal sisters are living in the poorest conditions in this country, die at the hands of their male partners eight times more often, I think it is, than white women do in Canada, and it seems to me that this is a perfect opportunity to set some priorities. I think providing funding for aboriginal women's organizations in Canada needs to be one of the priorities, if not the first priority. I don't see us, as women's groups, being true to systemic change work, moving forward, without naming that and focusing on it.

Thanks again for the opportunity to be here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we conclude, let me just thank you. This is a new committee and we're very much feeling our way. I frequently use the expression that I feel like we're pushing uphill sometimes—most of the time. We need your help to move the agenda forward. We've heard conflicting views, and there will be conflicting views around this table, but I think all of us are headed in the same direction. So please work with us.

Thank you for coming today. We'll be meeting with another group next Tuesday. I think this was invaluable for the discussion that we're moving forward.

Before we adjourn, can I talk to committee members for one minute? The notice has been sent for the committee to meet on Thursday, from 4 p.m. until 4:45 p.m., to discuss future business. There are some of us, at least three of us on this side, that I know have a conflict. I'm just curious to know whether all committee members are available, whether we could try to reschedule to another time. I need a little bit of direction.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: I just want to thank all of the ladies for coming. I just think you really are representative of very hard-working women.

The time doesn't matter to me.

The Chair: We will try to see. It will be a brief meeting.

Ms. Jean Crowder: I can't be here, because I have health committee from 11 to 1 o'clock.

● (1830)

The Chair: What if we did it at 1 o'clock for about a half an hour, or three-quarters of an hour?

Okay. That's what we'll look at.

Just to anybody who wants one, we have a few copies of the gender-based analysis report up here. It is available on our website, if you don't want to put it in your suitcase. Thank you.

Paddy.

Hon. Paddy Torsney: Can I clarify that claim forms are going to be given to all the witnesses?

The Chair: We will make certain everybody who wants one has one.

Thank you all again.

The meeting is adjourned.

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